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## The Incorporation of Deaf American Culture and History in Secondary Education Classrooms

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THE INCORPORATION OF DEAF AMERICAN CULTURE AND HISTORY  
IN SECONDARY EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

by

James B. Smith

A project submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in

The Education of the Deaf Program  
in the Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education

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2013

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### The Incorporation of Deaf American Culture & History in Secondary Education Classrooms

Bilingual-Bicultural Education (Bi-Bi) has a positive impact on language development and social-psychological development of Deaf children (Baker, 2011; Scott, 2010; Humphries & Humphries, 2010). This development is predicated on the child's access to American Sign Language (ASL); however, the role of Deaf culture and history in Bi-Bi is not well-defined (Ladd, 2003). Children at Bi-Bi schools and programs often acquire cultural aspects through social interactions among their Deaf acquaintances rather than in the classroom. The socialization and cultural sensitivity of Deaf children does not constitute a formal instruction and mastery in *all* the elements of culture, as often believed in Bi-Bi education. The cultural development through social interactions at school and in the dormitory atmosphere, extracurricular events, cultural events, and in the context of sports and competitions, is often acquired naturally and does not need direct instruction (Bahan, 2006). The rich history and artistic heritage of Deaf culture are often not transmitted until well after high school (Singleton & Tittle, 2000).

The lack of rich history and the extensive cultural heritage of Deaf people among Deaf children in secondary education might be due to the fact that over ninety percent of Deaf children are born to hearing parents (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004). The parents are not knowledgeable of Deaf history and culture; therefore, the teaching of this component of the child's education is left in the hands of Bi-Bi schools and programs. The transmission of history and culture to Deaf children during daily interactions is impacted depending on how it is being transmitted, if at all, by Deaf children of Deaf parents, Deaf adults that qualify as role models, and faculty members

of the school (Padden & Humphries, 2005; Antia, Stinson & Gaustad, 2002; Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996). The situation is dire enough to suggest urgency in including Deaf American culture and history in the classroom in order to enhance cultural awareness. The necessity of incorporating the culture and history of Deaf Americans as a means to motivate students to learn and develop mastery in ASL and written English is too important to be ignored (West, 2010; Small & Cripps, 2008).

Even though Deaf Education teacher training programs do offer curriculum developed to assist in incorporating the history and culture of Deaf people, there are limited materials or strategies on how to fit this into the standard core curriculum without alterations (Gallimore, 2004). The purpose of this paper was to determine what schools for the Deaf are doing today in Bi-lingual and Bi-cultural classroom programming to enrich pupils' literacy and literature skills in English and ASL by means of providing historical and cultural awareness of Deaf people.

The incorporation of Deaf American culture and history in secondary education would not only enhance the development of ASL and English, but promote a sense of pride, reinforce identity, and strengthen socio-psychological development of Deaf children (Lee, 2011; West, 2010; Obasi, 2008; Gallimore, 2004; Munoz-Baell & Ruiz, 2000; Dolnick, 1993). The children could have an enhanced sense of belonging and define their position in society as a cultural minority. Ultimately, it is the right of Deaf children to attain a heritage that rightfully belongs to them (Small & Cripps, 2008).

### **Research questions**

Do Bi-Bi programs and schools incorporate Deaf American culture and history into the standard curriculum, in Deaf Studies and/or ASL electives courses, or not at all? Why is there a

need to incorporate the history and culture of Deaf people into the classroom? How might Deaf history and culture be incorporated into academic classrooms without altering the curriculum? The purpose of this project is to answer the question as to why and how to present Deaf history and culture courses in secondary education. The solution lies in incorporating Deaf history into already established core curriculum requirements, ensuring students easy access to their own culture and history. The results would include motivating students to learn general history, empowering students to develop opinions related to their surroundings, and enabling students to develop critical thinking, and enhancing analytical and general academic skills (Enns, 2006; West, 2010, Scott, 2010). In addition, the student would develop a sense of pride in defining his/her identity as a member of a cultural minority.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study due to the scarcity of bicultural research available in Bilingual-Bicultural education for Deaf children. The study was biased toward Bi-Bi programming due to the emphasis on the culture and history of Deaf people, as such areas are not commonly addressed in other program methodologies. Since there is no research on the validity of a pedagogical approach to incorporate Deaf American culture and history in secondary education, research is needed; thus the reliability of this project is unclear. This project was based on the Bi-Bi philosophy, but included attempts to incorporate cultural and multicultural approaches that are in practice at public schools where two or more cultures and languages are taught. These pedagogical approaches were adapted to meet the needs, expectations and requirements of a Bi-Bi education for Deaf students; however, further research is needed to determine the effectiveness of these approaches.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Introduction**

The contexts of how, why and necessity to incorporate Deaf American culture and history in classrooms was examined. The achievement of this goal was based on three areas: philosophies, pedagogy and role of educators in the process.

### **Bilingual-Bicultural Approach**

The Bi-Bi philosophy of Deaf Education has its basis in simultaneous bilingual educational philosophies in that it supports the acquisition of the native language, ASL, and uses it to teach English in its written form (Mayer & Akamatsu, 1999; Mayer & Wells, 1996; Baker, 2011; Cummins, 2006). Content areas are taught using bilingual methods in which both languages are present. Bilingualism supports strong concept development and acquisition of world knowledge, English literacy, and the development of a strong self-identity (Holcomb, 1997; Small & Cripps, 2008, Parasnis, 1997). The goal is to prepare each child to be fully involved and successful in both the Deaf community and the hearing world (Swanwick & Gregory, 2007). The ideology of Bi-Bi in Deaf Education is in contrast to the common belief of Bi-Bi practice in the United States in which mastery of two languages is not generally supported. However, the mastery of both languages, ASL and English, enables and permits Deaf children to embrace their cultural identity and interact with the dominant culture(s).

Historically, Deaf people have experienced years of oppression because of their anti-pathological views about themselves (Munoz-Baell & Ruiz, 2000; Senghas & Monaghan, 2002). The Bi-Bi approach in Deaf Education is an educational methodology that supports the native language, ASL, and has earned the respect of Deaf people (Small & Cripps, 2008; Lee, 2011;

Ladd, 2003). ASL is considered on an equal basis with English, and can qualify the Deaf as a minority cultural group within the larger society (Enns, 2006; Small & Cripps, 2008).

The Bi-Bi approach for Deaf Education excludes the explanation to outline the improvement and maintenance of Deaf American culture and history in Bi-Bi education. All cultures encompass two distinct areas: material and nonmaterial (Macionis, 2009; Hardwick & Holtgrieve, 1996; Ladd, 2003). Material traits of cultures include technology, tools, housing and clothing, etc. Nonmaterial cultural traits include oral history, religion, values, art, music and customs, etc. (Hardwick & Holtgrieve, 1996; Parasnis, 1997; Rubenstein, 2005; Rowntree, Lewis, Price, & Wyckoff, 2009). The definition of bicultural for Deaf people means, based on Ila Parasnis, the intertwining of two cultures and languages (Parasnis, 1997). Bi-Bi education is based on the belief that cultural aspects are acquired naturally, whereas classroom instruction is given to facilitate the mastery of two languages (Bahan, 1996).

Culture is often transmitted from one person to another or by a group of people to newer members of the group by “imitation, instruction and example” (Steel & Taras, 2010, p. 212). It is important to emphasize that the “culture is learned, not innate, and is shared, not individual, behavior that is held in common by a group of people” (Rowntree et al., 2009, p.29). The transmission of Deaf culture among Deaf children in Bi-Bi programs/schools often occurs by “example,” not imitation or instruction, contrary to Ben Bahan’s assumption that culture is acquired through interactions (Hardwick & Holtgrieve, 1996; Bentley, Lipo, Herzog & Hahn, 2007; Bahan, 1996). In common cultures around the world, imitation and instruction of material and nonmaterial cultural traits happen naturally in the home, passing from parent to child. Since ninety percent of Deaf children are born to homes that are not culturally accessible to Deaf children, Bi-Bi schools/programs face potential challenges to fill the void for those Deaf children



by means of fostering imitation and instruction in addition to example (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004; Dolnick, 1993).

Bi-Bi education supports the native language of Deaf people as being equal to that of spoken language. However, belief that Deaf culture is equivalent to other cultures is lacking (Lee, 2011; Small & Cripps, 2008).

Although the Bi-Bi education philosophies existent today are often addressed surrounding the nativization of American Sign Language and learning English, there is a need for a philosophy that has the potential to address Deaf American culture and history academically (Stewart & Kluwin, 2001; Ladd, 2003).

### **Dual language immersion/Bicultural approach**

Given that the method of educating Deaf children is Bi-Bi, there is a need to address the development of a program that will meet the cultural needs of Deaf children. In order to do this, consideration should be given to adopting and adapting the Dual Language Immersion Approach in concert with the Bi-Bi Approach. These approaches embrace certain principles that will assist in transmitting the culture and history of Deaf people to Deaf children effectively.

The Dual Language Immersion Approach is distinct from the Bi-Bi approach in those two groups of different languages and cultures interact with each other to develop proficiency in two languages and cultures. Bi-Bi education for the Deaf often involves only one cultural group (Lindholm-Leary, 2007; Ladd, 2003). The need for students to understand the background of other students promotes tolerance and respect (Howard, Sugarman, Christian, Lindholm-Leary, & Rogers, 2007). The interactions occur during instruction that is provided in the classroom to transmit and promote both cultures, both by students and the teacher. The case of the Deaf is different in that the culture is mostly not transmitted directly by the culture and language of the

child's home. Deaf children attending a Bi-Bi program need a way to acquire their own cultural identity and language. The Dual Approach provides that students share their own language and culture with each other (Howard et al., 2007; Collier & Thomas, 2004). Since Bi-Bi schools often perform excellently in addressing the needs of developing ASL and English, this paper discussed the cultural aspect of Bi-Bi by means of adapting the Dual Language Approach in cultural education.

The adaptation of the Dual Language education principle is based on the fact that over ninety percent of Deaf children have hearing parents and the association with Deaf children of Deaf parents is limited. The suggestion for adapting the Dual Language approach in Bi-Bi education by means of transmitting culture and history to Deaf students, lies mainly on the shoulders of community members, educators and administrators rather than teachers and students alone (Small & Cripps, 2008; Enns, 2006; Swanwick & Gregory, 2007).

The adapted principle of the Dual Language Approach promotes Deaf children's self-identity and pride, and the embracing of the heritage of Deaf people as has been done with other cultural minorities (Montaño & Burstein, 2006; Scott, 2010; West, 2010; Bahan, 1996).

The combination of the Dual Language Approach and the Bi-Bi approach is an effort to address the needs of integration of culture and history into Deaf Bi-Bi classrooms and schools/programs (Ritchie & Rau, 2006). The goal of simultaneously teaching the bicultural in education would result in reinforcing the established Bilingual-Bicultural philosophy of Deaf Education.

### **Multicultural approach**

The foundation of Bi-Bi education for the Deaf is to focus on the instruction of ASL as a first language, and the use ASL to learn English literacy; however, some Deaf children who enter

Bi-Bi Deaf Education classrooms from ethnic minority homes often present a challenge to the Bi-Bi philosophy (MacPherson et al., 2004). Due to issues associated with the bicultural portion of Bi-Bi education, the efforts of addressing multicultural children are often overlooked. The consequence is that the value of multicultural education has diminished in some Bi-Bi schools, despite the increasing of diverse children in the classroom (Vodounou & De Leon, 2004; Solomon, 2010; Allen, 2002).

This oversight might be associated with the fact that some minority Deaf view their ethnic group as the priority identity in addition to a lack of support for diversity in Bi-Bi education for the Deaf (Smiler, 2006; Foster & Kinuthia, 2003; Ram, 1998; Stewart, 1996; Clark, 2002; James & Woll, 2004). African-Americans and Hispanics/Latinos are especially of concern as they constitute at least a third of the total Deaf population in the United States (Mitchell, 2004).

The diversity in the Deaf community raises the need for incorporating other cultures and histories, especially Deaf minorities, to enrich the settings of Bi-Bi education. There is a need to promote a sense of respect for different languages and cultures within the community and increase tolerance for difference (Garcia, 2011; Nieto, 1994). Further research is needed to improve the areas of multiculturalism in the Bi-Bi Deaf Education system (Vodounou & De Leon, 2004; MacPherson et al., 2004; Stewart, 1996).

Because of multiculturalism, the Bi-Bi program should provide instruction in diversity among the Deaf community and develop principles of tolerance for differences. The suggestion of incorporating diversity in the classroom is not a substitute for the Bi-Bi philosophy, but a way to support and enrich it.

**Pedagogy approaches and techniques**

The Bi-Bi philosophy has been examined and reviewed and suggestions have been made as to how other approaches can be incorporated in order to enhance the educational experience for Deaf children. Due to minimal research on culture in classrooms for Deaf children, ideas can be borrowed by reviewing how bilingual, bicultural philosophies of other minority groups, such as the Maori of New Zealand, Chicano of New Mexico, Hualapai of Arizona, and Achí of Guatemala might be applicable in classrooms for Deaf children. How do these sub-culture groups address the preservation of their history and culture in dominant culture classrooms?

Each group mentioned experienced years of oppression from the dominant culture. Consequently, they were determined to maintain their culture and history by ensuring that the rising generation developed a cultural identity, the ability to switch between two cultures effectively, and were empowered as a cultural minority. Each subculture also worked to enable the children to have a competent use of two languages (Watahomigie & McCarty, 1994; Aguilar, 2011; Moed, 2011; McAuley, 2009; Cárdenas, 2011; Ritchie & Rau, 2006). Such experiences and sense of cultural identity is not any different than the Deaf community; in fact, the Deaf share the same concerns (Holbrook, 2009; Marbury, 2007; Ram, 1998; Munoz-Baell & Ruiz, 2000; Solomon, 2010; Smiler, 2006; Lee, 2011; Obasi, 2008; Iversen, 2011).

These cultural minorities promote learning environments that allow them to incorporate their culture and history in public education. The learning environment for these minority children emphasizes the nonmaterial trait of culture elements in ways that including “economic, political, biophysical, social, religious, emotional and ideological principles and practices” in classroom instruction (Schensul and Schensul (1992), as cited in Ritchie & Rau, 2006 p.5).

Researchers concerning Hualapai of Arizona and Achí of Guatemala have each developed a Bi-Bi model to define how they achieve their intention of incorporating language and culture in the classroom (Watahomigie & McCarty, 1994; Moed, 2011). The model was developed to guide curriculum with instructional units on cultural topics such as home, local, community and natural environments “aimed at providing parallel content to ... ‘regular’ school curriculum” (Watahomigie & McCarty, 1994 p.35). The success of the model relies on how culture and history of the minority are integrated in the classroom.

The philosophy of pedagogy approaches and techniques are based on the belief that the value of transmitting culture and history at school is equivalent to the home-based cultural transmission process. It is important to recognize that the incorporation of history is equally important to culture itself (Moed, 2011; DeGennaro & Brown, 2008; Podany, 2008; Montaña & Burstein, 2006; Watahomigie & McCarty, 1994; Stearns, 1994). Instruction in the classroom concerning culture must review its history to better understand how culture has evolved through time and define certain cultural norms and behaviors.

Cultural norms and behaviors are often not defined among Deaf people, specifically in primary and secondary education (Parasnis, 1997). It is probably true that some Deaf history and culture is being taught: a museum or archive room is established at some schools for the Deaf, assemblies might be held focusing on Deaf adults, elective courses might be offered that teach History of the Deaf, but this does not constitute incorporation of the nonmaterial of history and culture in the academic classroom. The argument is based on the fact that existing curriculum is based on famous, well-known Deaf individuals and basic cultural elements and traditions being taught outside the academic classroom (Carroll & Mather, 1998). This project promotes the idea of incorporating a longitudinal and comprehensive history and culture of Deaf people in

academic subjects. Thus, it is vital to take pedagogy approaches from other bilingual-bicultural cultures into consideration.

### **Role of educators**

The role of educators is vital in many cultures, including the Deaf culture, to ensure transmission of cultural heritage to children (Chigeza, 2011; Small & Cripps, 2008). The expectations of culture on educators might be burdensome and enjoyable at the same time. The burden of transmitting culture to children is stressful in Deaf education where most teachers are hearing and over ninety percent of children are born to hearing parents (Suggs, 2007; Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004). However, it is assumed that teachers who are proficient in the Bi-Bi education philosophy have achieved mastery in ASL and written English (Small & Cripps, 2008). It is vital that hearing and Deaf educators immerse themselves in the cultural world of Deaf people in order to be qualified as a transmitter of Deaf American culture and history.

### **Potential challenges**

The challenges found in the transmission of culture and Deaf history to Deaf children should be considered by educators. Therefore, this section is an attempt to answer the questions that might arise as to how this transmission might be accomplished. The challenges found in providing the culture and history of Deaf people in the classroom would be children who use cochlear implants, children who entered secondary education from other educational settings and multicultural Deaf children. The challenges found in Deaf education are not unique, as several other cultures have faced similar issues. For instance, Philbert Watahomigie Sr. (1992), a native of the Hualapai tribe situated in northwest Arizona, who first worked at Peach Springs Bi-Bi School in 1974, said, “100% of the kids spoke Hualapai. That’s changing now. ... We’re even getting some younger adults who don’t speak the language, coming back to learn Hualapai” (as

cited in Watahomigie & McCarty, 1994 p.39). Deaf education faces a similar issue in that students have often been placed in schools that do not use American Sign Language.

Educators could involve children who use cochlear implants and the Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) approach in a way similar to how educators at the Peach Springs Bi-Bi school involved their students-- by providing those children a pathway to discover their Deaf identity through empowerment. The incorporation of Deaf culture and history would provide a powerful pathway for users of cochlear implants and LSL to enhance their socio-psychological well-being in a positive manner.

Educators not only face challenges with children influenced by pathological views of Deafness, but also with multicultural Deaf who are members of other cultural groups. All children in Bi-Bi education classrooms would need to obtain instruction in diversity within the Deaf community. Specifically, multicultural children would strengthen their cultural knowledge to improve their identity as a member of the Deaf minority. The presence of multicultural children and diversity, including cochlear implants users in the classroom, promotes opportunity for the school atmosphere at large to develop principles of respect and tolerance for differences.

### **Summary**

The context of how and why to incorporate Deaf American culture and history in classrooms was examined by reviewing other Bi-Bi programs and their applications to Deaf Bi-Bi education. The foundation of incorporating culture and history was based on Bi-Bi education that provides a door of opportunity for interactions with two histories and cultures, namely hearing and Deaf. The interactions allow Deaf children to develop a sense of pride in being Deaf as well as preparing them for full involvement in both worlds.

## **Method**

### **Overview**

The definition of ‘Bicultural’ in Bi-Bi Deaf Education is not defined adequately for a Deaf individual. As explained by Cassie Biggs, ‘bicultural’ means the development of Deaf characteristics and identity (Biggs, 2004). The emphasis on Deaf culture, bicultural development, and the pedagogy of transmitting culture to the Deaf in scholarly works is often overlooked and/or minimal (Small & Cripps, 2008; Stewart & Kluwin, 2001). Such works often demonstrate an assumption that the bicultural portion of Bi-Bi education for the Deaf simply means to support the development of identity in order to become culturally Deaf through interaction of language use (Humphries & Humphries, 2011; Bahan, 2006; Holcomb, 1997). This assumption is at risk due to the deficiency of understanding the required elements of a culture. The nonmaterial element of culture in this assumption lacks the transmission by instruction within the area of Deaf culture. In essence, history, art, and the context of cultural literature must be taught, not acquired through interaction. It is suggested that Bilingual-Bicultural education for the Deaf is qualified to meet the cultural development of Deaf children as long as it includes all of the acquisition traits of any culture: imitation, instruction and example (Steel & Taras, 2010).

Ultimately, the general definition of Bilingual-Bicultural education for the Deaf should be revised to include the need of culture development. Accordingly, the definition of Bi-Bi would be revised as:

Bilingual Bicultural education is the method of using Deaf children’s acquisition of their native language, American Sign Language, in order to learn English as a second language and achieve competence in both languages. In addition, students learn the culture and history of the Deaf



through imitation, instruction, and examples (Palmer, 2009; Small & Cripps, 2008; Senghas & Monaghan, 2002).

Regardless of the potential revision of the Bi-Bi definition, some Deaf schools across the nation still claim to demonstrate the Bi-Bi philosophy (LaSasso & Lollis, 2003). It is assumed that those schools concentrate on the nativization of American Sign Language and learning English with some incorporation of Deaf culture in the classroom. The questions arise: Do some Deaf schools pursue the teaching of biculturalism as well as bilingualism in the classroom? If so, what and how is this being done in order to achieve cultural nonmaterial awareness through instruction in the classroom? The result of this research is presented to discover what and how cultural nonmaterial awareness is being taught in the classroom.

### **Information Gathering**

A survey of schools across the United States was developed to determine the results of incorporating Deaf culture and history in secondary education. The research methodology consisted of an online survey questionnaire that was sent via email to administrators of 100 schools that have secondary education programs for Deaf and hard of hearing children across the United States. The list of 100 schools was extracted from *Schools and Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in the United States* by Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center housed at Gallaudet University in which a total of 108 schools are listed. A hundred schools were selected using the following criteria: each school should have a secondary education program and serve a general population of Deaf and hard of hearing youths. For instance, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing School at the Hearing and Speech Center of Northern California, St. Joseph's School for the Deaf, and Las Vegas Charter School for the Deaf, to name a few, are not included because secondary education services are not available or provided.

The survey was sent to qualified schools regardless of philosophy and includes diverse educational settings (residential, day school, etc.). This was done in order to maintain unbiased responses on collectible information as much as possible. In addition, recipients could decline to participate in the survey process at any time.

The survey was developed with the intention to obtain answers to what and how cultural nonmaterial awareness is being taught in the classroom. Since surveys are often biased, open-ended questions were offered to capture information that cannot be found in closed-ended questions. Furthermore, the survey questions were reviewed by other professionals in the field of Deaf Education. The questions have been revised in response to given constructive critiques in order to provide clarity and relevance to the research questions. The questions asked are below, following the sample letter.

A formal letter was sent to administrators of 100 different schools using university email. A sample of the letter is available below:

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is James Smith, a graduate student in Deaf Education Teaching Preparatory Program at Utah State University. I am sending you a request to fill out a survey that would help me with my graduate research concerning history courses in secondary education.

The survey should take no longer than five minutes. Thank you in advance for your assistance. I would appreciate your response by December 9, 2011. Your feedback will be extremely helpful with my research.

The survey can be found by visiting this link:  
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YY2GGQJ>

James Smith  
Graduate student  
Deaf Education Teacher Preparatory Program  
Utah State University

### Survey Questionnaire

Upon responding to the letter, the administrator saw two sections of the survey questionnaire: demographic information and a mix of open-ended and close-ended questions section. Recipients were required to complete the demographic information on the survey before the next section could be revealed. This approach prevented possible repetitive responses from the same school on the survey. Once the first section was completed, the second section of the survey was revealed with the following questions:

1. Does your school have a course of any kind that discusses or reviews history and/or culture of the Deaf? Check all that apply:
  - a. Club, i.e. drama club that integrates Deaf culture into productions.
  - b. A separate course that satisfies electives credit(s) toward graduation.
  - c. Not offered in school at this time.
  - d. Other (please specify)
2. Does your school integrate Deaf American Culture and History into other subjects such as History, Geography, Social Studies and/or English?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. What materials/sources do you presently use for integrating Deaf American Culture and History into your standard coursework? (if none, use N/A in your response)
4. If there were materials available that provided techniques and methods for integrating Deaf American Culture and History into the classroom, would you be interested in such materials?

- a. Yes
  - b. No
5. If your school does not incorporate Deaf American Culture and History into your school curriculum, would you please explain the reason(s) for not doing so?

The questionnaire provided some clues as to whether or not secondary education programs are providing culture and history of the Deaf to students. The survey also provided vital information on how schools manage to incorporate such history and culture in the classroom, i.e. curriculum dynamics, materials and pedagogy. Ultimately the survey allowed schools that did not provide any instruction on culture and/or history in the classroom to express reasons as to why not. In addition, the survey gave recipients the opportunity to express their interest in further information and resources that could support the incorporation of Deaf culture and history in the classroom.

The first request to respond to the survey was sent with a follow-up email two weeks later and again once a month for three months. The frequency of email was necessary as the survey requests were sent during the holiday season from November to January.

### **Analysis**

The acceptable amount of responses on the survey was over 30% of the original sample which means the survey qualified for analysis. The responses were analyzed in three different categories: demographic, in order to omit repetitive responses; closed-ended questions; and open-ended questions.

The repetitive responses are present in the survey because it was sent to administrators which included principals, assistants or vice principals, curriculum director or director of instruction, or other administration positions in each school. This approach was done to ensure

each school had been reached. Some of these administrators forwarded the letter to proper individuals within the school, namely teacher(s) of certain subjects, i.e. Social Studies teacher to respond to the survey.

### **Analysis Challenges**

Challenges and common survey problems arose in this survey, and brought bias to the overall intention of this study. One problem was that there were four “nonresponse biases” in the survey that means only a portion of the survey was completed, creating a very different pool than was intended. Another challenge was “response bias” (Barribeau et al., 2012). When asked twice, a respondent could respond slightly differently each time, or was just answering without really thinking the question through. This challenge was not evaluated but it is vital to note that a potential bias is presented in the survey. These challenges have altered the validity of the survey. Due to these potential biases, the results focus on the responses received rather than considering all potential responses in the final statistics (Barribeau et al., 2012). The validity of the survey was based on the pool of respondents and the diversity of schools represented on the survey, rather than the original sample pool.

### **Summary**

The analysis of the survey responses provided information necessary to ascertain how Deaf culture and history is being taught in schools for the Deaf around the nation. The data collected from the survey supports the necessity of incorporating Deaf American culture and history in secondary education and the development of materials is needed. The survey also explained why certain schools are not teaching Deaf culture in the classroom. The results of the survey also addressed areas of improvement needed in relation to cultural instruction in Bilingual-Bicultural Deaf Education.

### Results

Surveys were sent to 100 various programs and schools with a good sized Deaf population; 42 schools responded. The results do not include all 42 schools because four different schools started the survey by filling out the demographic information, but did not complete the questions, thus they were excluded from the percentage of the survey results.

Survey results show that 76% of 38 schools integrate culture and history of Deaf people into academic subjects such as history, geography, social studies and English. Besides academic courses, the same number of schools suggested they not only integrate history and culture of Deaf people in academic subjects but also have a separate course that satisfies electives credit(s) toward graduation in this subject.

The survey also asked what materials/sources are presently used for integrating Deaf American culture and history into the coursework. The open-ended responses suggest there is some Deaf history and culture being incorporated into academic subjects. For instance, one teacher stated, "I don't use a specific source material, but I do try to find bills and laws relevant to the Deaf community to discuss during Government class." There is evidence that incorporating culture and history in the classroom is being practiced in some schools. Although *Deaf Heritage* by Jack Gannon was the most common material used in elective courses and some academic subjects, some stated they use various other sources. For example: "Text sets that are changing: Specific books, films, on line resources, [following the] ASL Standards, Language standards Identified in \_\_\_\_'s Common Core Curriculum;" and, "Some teachers use various websites regarding Deaf American Culture and use some books from the library to incorporate the lesson plans;" and "We have the \_\_\_\_ School curriculum, we use that to some extent, but we have other materials, books, resources, [and] on line resources..." In addition to electives

courses, an ASL Specialist is being used at two different schools to teach culture and history in academic classrooms.

Besides elective courses, 26%, or ten schools, stated that there is some exposure to culture and history of Deaf people through extracurricular activities. Only seven different schools stated they offered both extracurricular and electives courses. An example of extracurricular activities reported is: “Jr. NAD Club [and] Academic Bowl Team.” Finally, the rest of the schools that responded showed 16% did not offer any kind of exposure to Deaf culture and history in elective course(s), extracurricular activities, nor in classrooms. The reasons reported for not offering Deaf culture and history are:

1. “It's not part of the curriculum.”
2. “We just haven't taken the time or resources to develop the curriculum.”
3. “We are fulfilling the core requirements of the state for graduation. Time is limited for other curriculum.”
4. “Administrators might think that classes would not be needed because not enough students would sign up.”

It is important to note that regardless of the reason for not incorporating Deaf culture and history, 100% of administrators and teachers from the 38 schools expressed interests in materials that provide techniques and methods for integrating Deaf American culture and history into the classroom.

### **Discussion**

Certainly some Deaf history and culture is being taught: a museum or archive room is established at some schools, assemblies are held focusing on Deaf adult guests, electives are

offered that teach History of the Deaf, but it does not constitute the complete and continuous incorporation of history and culture in academic subject classrooms. For instance, one middle school teacher and one high school teacher from the same school responded to the survey. Their entries stated middle school does not offer any kind of exposure to Deaf culture and history except through extracurricular activities. A high school teacher at the same school stated differently that they have an elective course that discussed culture and history of Deaf people. In addition to the elective course, this teacher incorporates Deaf culture and history in the classroom, using the following materials:

“Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf in America” by Jack R. Gannon and accompanying student workbook: “Deaf Heritage: A Student Text and Schoolwork” A visit to [school’s] Deaf Museum (and once in a while ... [other] Deaf Museum), an outdoor tour of [the] campus with teacher's explanation of history behind each building. Various videotapes (both DVD and VHS) related to Deaf history borrowed from [school’s] Sign Language Library and Resources room. Few related game boxes Library of Congress collection (if it has related materials)”

Students attending this school would not have full access to learning about the culture and history of Deaf people, but would need to wait until high school to have any explicit teaching on the subject. Another school faced a similar situation where an administrator stated their students do have access to culture and history of Deaf people through extracurricular activities, elective courses and also integration into academic courses. On the other hand, a teacher from the same school responsible for teaching the elective course stated they did not integrate culture and history in the classroom nor in extracurricular activities, but mostly in an elective course. This situation illustrates an expression of differences in perspectives between the



administrator and the teacher. The teacher is the one who actually delivers the curriculum and may be in a more accurate position to determine whether, or not, culture and history is being incorporated in the regular curriculum.

The responses suggest that the incorporation of history and culture in secondary education is not maintained on a regular basis. The responses also might be biased and indicate that the incorporation in the classroom occurred because the teacher taught the elective course curriculum in addition to the regular curriculum. This situation is possible when a teacher is knowledgeable concerning academic subjects such as Social Studies in addition to Deaf Studies. Incorporating history and culture in academic subjects is not an issue with that teacher, but might be more of a challenge for other teachers.

It is evident that several schools are providing Deaf and hard of hearing children some access to Deaf culture and history, however, this is not being done on a consistent basis. Thus the question arises; Do these schools mean that they integrate Deaf American culture and history in elective courses such as Deaf Studies and ASL classes rather than in the general curriculum? For instance, some responders clarified by commenting in the “Other” section of the questionnaire that asked, “Does your school have a course of any kind that discusses or reviews history and/or culture of the Deaf?” Even though one school responded, “not offered in school at this time” to the question, in the “Other” section the comment stated, “We run a semester long Deaf culture course at the middle school level.” Another example is found in a different school that stated they have exposure to culture and history through extracurricular activities, an electives course *and* integrate Deaf American culture and history into academic subjects. The comment was, “All students are required to take a Deaf Studies course for graduation;” however, no response was made to what materials are being used to incorporate such subject into academic courses. One

school stated they have a separate course on culture and history of Deaf people that satisfies elective credits toward graduation; however, “We do provide our Deaf Studies in middle school every other year (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades) and high school (one credit required for graduation).” These comments demonstrate that the incorporation of Deaf culture and history is, in fact, occurring among electives courses more than within the academic subjects.

The survey also demonstrates the challenge of incorporating Deaf culture and history in that many of the materials and texts used in teaching the subjects are mostly written on a college reading level. Some responders stated: “Varied sources....Deaf Nation videos (Joel Barrish), *Deaf Heritage book*, *Signing Naturally chapter on Deaf culture.*”, “*Signing the Body Poetic*, YouTube for mentor ASL viewing samples, DeafLife, SignNews, *American Annals of the Deaf*, *Endeavor.*” The emphases in quotes are textbooks that are mostly written on a college level but are used for instruction for students on the secondary level. The most common source given was *Deaf Heritage* by Jack Gannon. Some schools stated they used materials of “All kinds - videotapes, *Signing Naturally Curriculum*, biographies and articles from publications and websites.” The variety and difficulty of sources suggests the lack of a standard curriculum and indicate the need to develop materials for secondary level students.

Several schools reported they do integrate Deaf culture and history into other subjects; however, when analyzing individual responses, it was found that the interpretation of ‘integrate’ differs from what was intended. For instance, one school stated they do not offer any Deaf culture and history courses as electives or extracurricular activities, but stated they do incorporate the subjects in academic courses by means of celebrating “Deaf Awareness Week [and] incorporate community members of the Deaf culture to speak to students.” Another school responded in a similar way by stating that they offered an elective course, extracurricular activity

and incorporated culture and history in academic courses through “Texts, \_\_\_\_ museum, guest speakers, [and] anecdotal stories.” This analysis shows that the actual percentage of classrooms that actually integrates Deaf culture and history into academic subjects such as math, English, and History is less than the survey results show.

Even though 76% reported incorporating Deaf history and culture in the classroom, there is evidence that few really are doing this. In reality, about 18%, at least seven schools in the survey, *demonstrated* that they incorporate the history and culture of Deaf people into academic subjects. One school stated, “Some teachers use various websites regarding Deaf American culture and use some books from the library to incorporate [into] the lesson plans.” For most schools and programs in the United States, the incorporation of the culture and history of Deaf Americans is not consistent or maintained throughout the secondary education curriculum.

### **Conclusion**

Schools and programs serving Deaf and hard of hearing students in the United States have an opportunity to impact a student’s language development and social-psychological development (Baker, 2011; Scott, 2010; Humphries & Humphries, 2010). In order to have culture become a part of the student’s identity, the stages of imitation, instruction and example must occur. In secondary education, students should learn their culture and history to the extent that they can then become models for others. For Bi-Bi education to truly accomplish this mission, the current practice must be redefined to include culture as a planned part of the regular curriculum.

In the literature review it was determined that certain Bilingual- Bicultural schools for minority populations are incorporating their language and culture into the regular curriculum. The survey indicated that in Deaf Education, some schools are providing socialization and limited instruction in Deaf culture and history, but for the most part are not incorporating these subjects into the regular curriculum. Materials for these subjects and ideas on how to incorporate them into the regular curriculum have not been developed. This proves to be an obstacle in how much instruction is given and in what ways. When training and materials are provided, Deaf Education Bi –Bi programs could fully integrate Deaf culture and history into the regular curriculum.

The expectation of cultural development among Deaf and hard of hearing students should parallel the development of American Sign Language, their native language, and English. As this expectation is developed and put into practice, it is predicted that students will have a sense of optimism and excitement towards learning and understanding the regular curriculum. The idea of incorporating Deaf culture and history in the regular curriculum can be utilized to advocate for bilingual-bicultural education of the Deaf effectively as it will develop Deaf students' socio-psychological, language, identity, and cultural potentials. Research on and the development of specifically developed techniques, methods, and materials is needed in order to realize the impact that knowledge of Deaf history and culture can have on student development.

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